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# BUSINESSLIKE GOVERNMENT

## LESSONS LEARNED FROM AMERICA'S BEST COMPANIES

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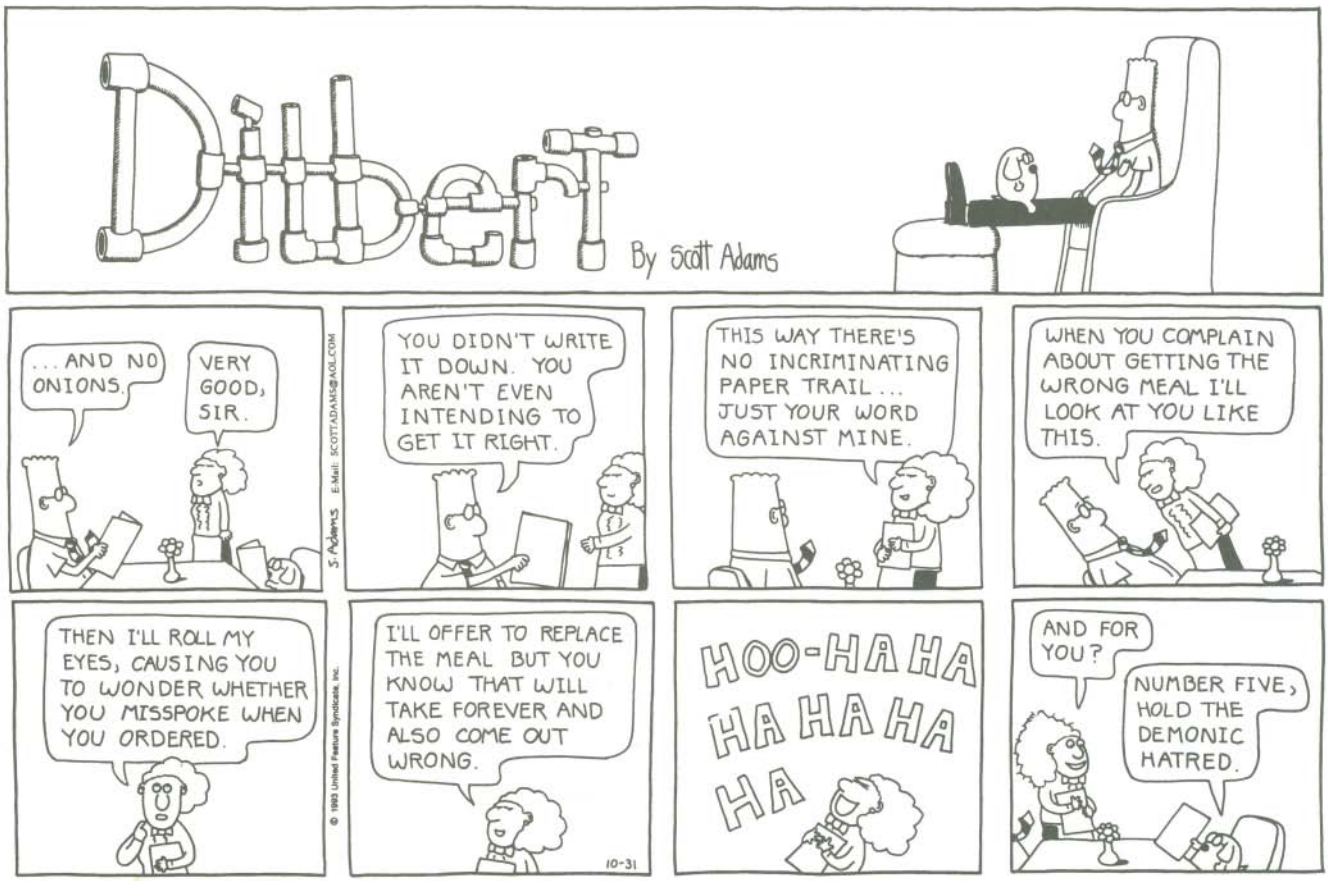
**Vice President Al Gore**

DILBERT™ comic strips by Scott Adams

NATIONAL PERFORMANCE REVIEW


Dilbert
By Scott Adams
...AND NO ONIONS.
VERY GOOD, SIR.
S. Adams E-Mail: SCOTTADAMS@AOL.COM
YOU DIDN'T WRITE IT DOWN. YOU AREN'T EVEN INTENDING TO GET IT RIGHT.
THIS WAY THERE'S NO INCRIMINATING PAPER TRAIL... JUST YOUR WORD AGAINST MINE.
WHEN YOU COMPLAIN ABOUT GETTING THE WRONG MEAL I'LL LOOK AT YOU LIKE THIS.
THEN I'LL ROLL MY EYES, CAUSING YOU TO WONDER WHETHER YOU MISSPOKE WHEN YOU ORDERED.
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I'LL OFFER TO REPLACE THE MEAL BUT YOU KNOW THAT WILL TAKE FOREVER AND ALSO COME OUT WRONG.
10-31
HOO-HA HA HA HA HA HA HA
AND FOR YOU?
NUMBER FIVE, HOLD THE DEMONIC HATRED.

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***Too many people began to feel the whole government was like one big "no help whatsoever" desk.***

HELLO, IS THIS THE "HELP DESK"?
NO, THAT GROUP GOT REENGINEERED OUT OF EXISTENCE.
I'M THE NEW "NO HELP WHATSOEVER DESK." MY JOB IS TO MAKE SURE YOU NEVER CALL AGAIN.
CAN YOU TELL ME HOW TO MAKE A PIE CHART?
CRUSH YOUR COMPUTER INTO SMALL CHUNKS, ADD FLOUR AND BAKE ONE HOUR.
WHILE YOU'RE WAITING, READ THE FREE NOVEL WE SENT YOU. IT'S A SPANISH STORY ABOUT A GUY NAMED "MANUAL."
REPEAT THE PROCESS UNTIL YOU GET THE DESIRED RESULT.
THIS LOST A LOT IN THE TRANSLATION.

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## Used to Abuse

For a long time, Americans have been unhappy with many government services. Of course, not everyone in the private sector was doing things right, either. Waiting in a long line at the bank or not being able to get a straight answer over the phone was just as frustrating as having to take a day off to visit a government office.

Customers were starved for attention and used to abuse.

Then something happened.

In the face of the information explosion and global competition, American business underwent its own revolution.

## *Evangelists of Customer Service*

In response to the President's order, 400 government workers met at Hunt Valley, Maryland, with 40 executives from Disney, Federal Express, Xerox, and other companies known for their customer focus.

They learned how Disney executives, including Judson Green, President of Walt Disney Attractions, spend time in their theme parks dressed up as Mickey, Donald, or Goofy — so they can learn first-hand about their customers.

They heard how Ralph Stayer, CEO of Johnsonville Foods, let production workers decide whether sausage tasted good enough to ship — so each employee would take responsibility for customers.

Finally, they accepted a challenge thrown down by Tom Peters, management expert, to become "raging inexorable thunderlizard evangelists of customer service."

***In search of excellence.***

WE'VE GOT TO FOCUS MORE ON THE NEEDS OF OUR CUSTOMERS.
I'VE HIRED FAMOUS BUSINESS CONSULTANT TOM PETERS TO FOLLOW YOU AROUND AND MAKE PASSIONATE CRITICISM.
IS THIS QUALITY? ARE YOU TRULY FOCUSED ON THE CUSTOMER?
GREAT... HE'S A SPITTER.
SCOTT ADAMS
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**Zoning in on the needs of the small business customer.**

SO... DILBERT, WELCOME TO THE SALES DEPARTMENT. I'M TINA, YOUR NEW BOSS.
HI
AS THE NEW GUY, YOU GET THE CUSTOMERS WHO DESPISE OUR PRODUCTS AND WANT TO HURT US PERSONALLY.
12-15
I HATE YOU! I HATE YOU!
YOU'LL BE SELLING TO THE SMALL BUSINESS MARKET. HE'S YOUR BEST ACCOUNT.
S.Adams
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TALES FROM THE REINVENTION ZONE

## The Loan Arranger

*Ex-Im is getting loans to small businesses through partnerships with private banks.*

***A helping hand for small business***

One of the toughest tasks for small business exporters is to find "working capital" — money to buy inventory and raw materials. Reinvention at the Export-Import Bank has provided easier access to funds.

Ex-Im, as it's called, is a government agency set up to promote U.S. exports. Until recently, its services have benefited mostly large exporters.

DILBERT, THE BOSS WOULD LIKE TO TALK TO YOU.
© 1989 United Feature Syndicate, Inc.
YOU WANTED ME?
AH, DILBERT, COME IN.
I'M TAKING TWO WEEKS OF VACATION AND I NEED COMPETENT LEADERSHIP WHILE I'M GONE.
AT LAST HE'S GIVING ME AN ASSIGNMENT WITH RESPONSIBILITY.
THAT'S WHY I GOT THIS TALKING SOCK MONKEY.
PULL THE STRING TWICE A DAY AND DO WHAT HE SAYS.
12-3
SCOTT ADAMS

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The source of their competitive advantage? When companies push responsibility down toward front-line employees, decisions can be made faster and better because those employees are closer to the market.

And new ideas percolate in such environments. Companies that have empowered employees — including Hewlett-Packard, GE, IBM, and Merck — have been strong enough to weather storms that sank many of their competitors.

Industry has taken this lesson to heart. But for government? It's like an earthquake. In fact, in this chapter, you will read about an actual earthquake that isolated some federal employees from their bosses — and they responded by becoming more productive. A kind of virtual

I'VE BEEN SAYING FOR YEARS THAT "EMPLOYEES ARE OUR MOST VALUABLE ASSET."
IT TURNS OUT THAT I WAS WRONG. MONEY IS OUR MOST VALUABLE ASSET. EMPLOYEES ARE NINTH.
I'M AFRAID TO ASK WHAT CAME IN EIGHTH.
CARBON PAPER.
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S. Adams
Internet: scottAdams@AOL.COM
3-3

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earthquake is shaking up the comfortable status quo of government hierarchy. It is changing management's perspective on the value and virtue of their employees.

## *Employees are the Government's Most Valuable Asset*

For a long time, many government workers felt as though they were in a Dilbert cartoon. They were imprisoned in a system where they had little power and no one listened to their ideas. Decisions were made so many levels above them that it seemed futile trying to change things.

So it comes as no surprise that the CEOs zeroed in on this problem. They told Vice President Gore: Your employees are your best asset. Start using them.

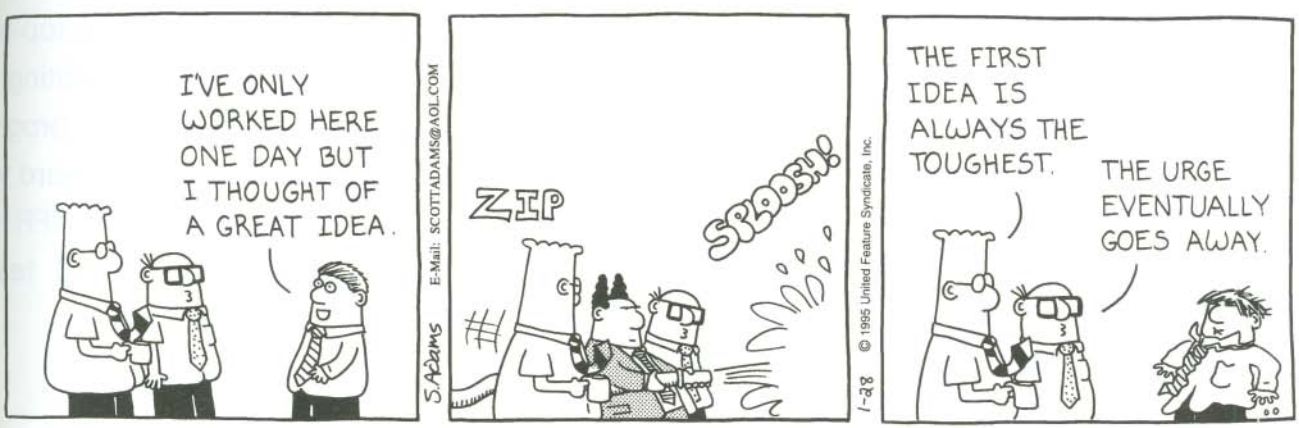
## *Involve the Workers*

No organization — public or private — can change unless the people doing the jobs are involved. Without this, directives from above just fill up the office wastebaskets.

Too often, large organizations are set up to get existing tasks done in a certain way, and people with vested interests may oppose any break in the normal pattern. Employees learn to do as they are told, even if they have better ideas.

Some employee ideas are discouraged quickly by managers who believe they already know the best methods. After all, managers are traditionally selected for being smart and aggressive. The natural inclination of such people is to want things done their way. For many of them, it isn't easy to say, "Let's try it your way."

Other employee ideas simply disappear into "suggestion programs" and are never heard of again. Processing times for employee suggestions sometimes last longer than the employees themselves.


I'VE ONLY WORKED HERE ONE DAY BUT I THOUGHT OF A GREAT IDEA.
S. Adams
E-Mail: SCOTTADAMS@AOL.COM
ZIP
SPOOSH!
1-28
© 1995 United Feature Syndicate, Inc.
THE FIRST IDEA IS ALWAYS THE TOUGHEST.
THE URGE EVENTUALLY GOES AWAY.

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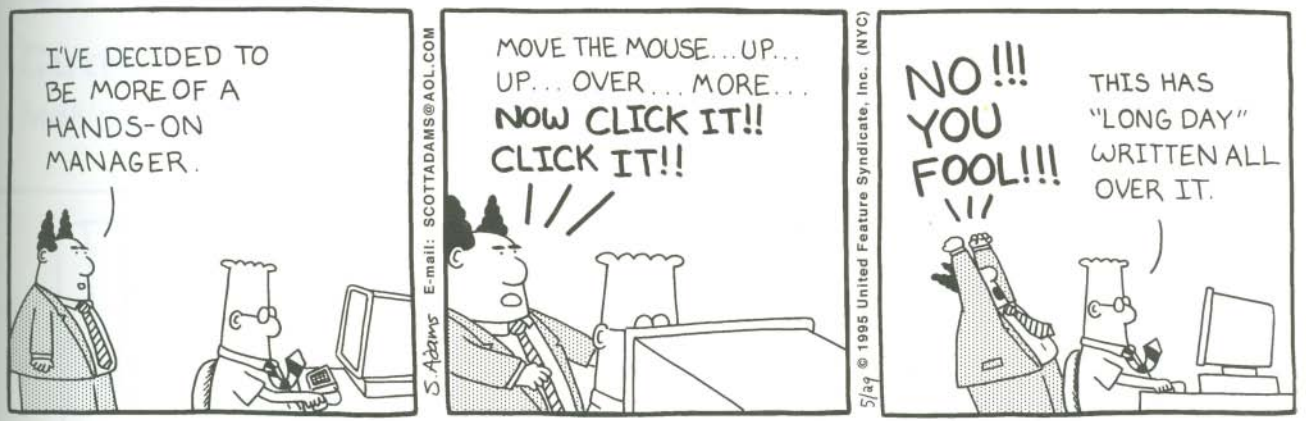
I'VE DECIDED TO BE MORE OF A HANDS-ON MANAGER.
MOVE THE MOUSE... UP... UP... OVER... MORE...
NOW CLICK IT!!
CLICK IT!!
NO!!! YOU FOOL!!!
THIS HAS "LONG DAY" WRITTEN ALL OVER IT.
S. Adams
E-mail: SCOTTADAMS@AOL.COM
5/29
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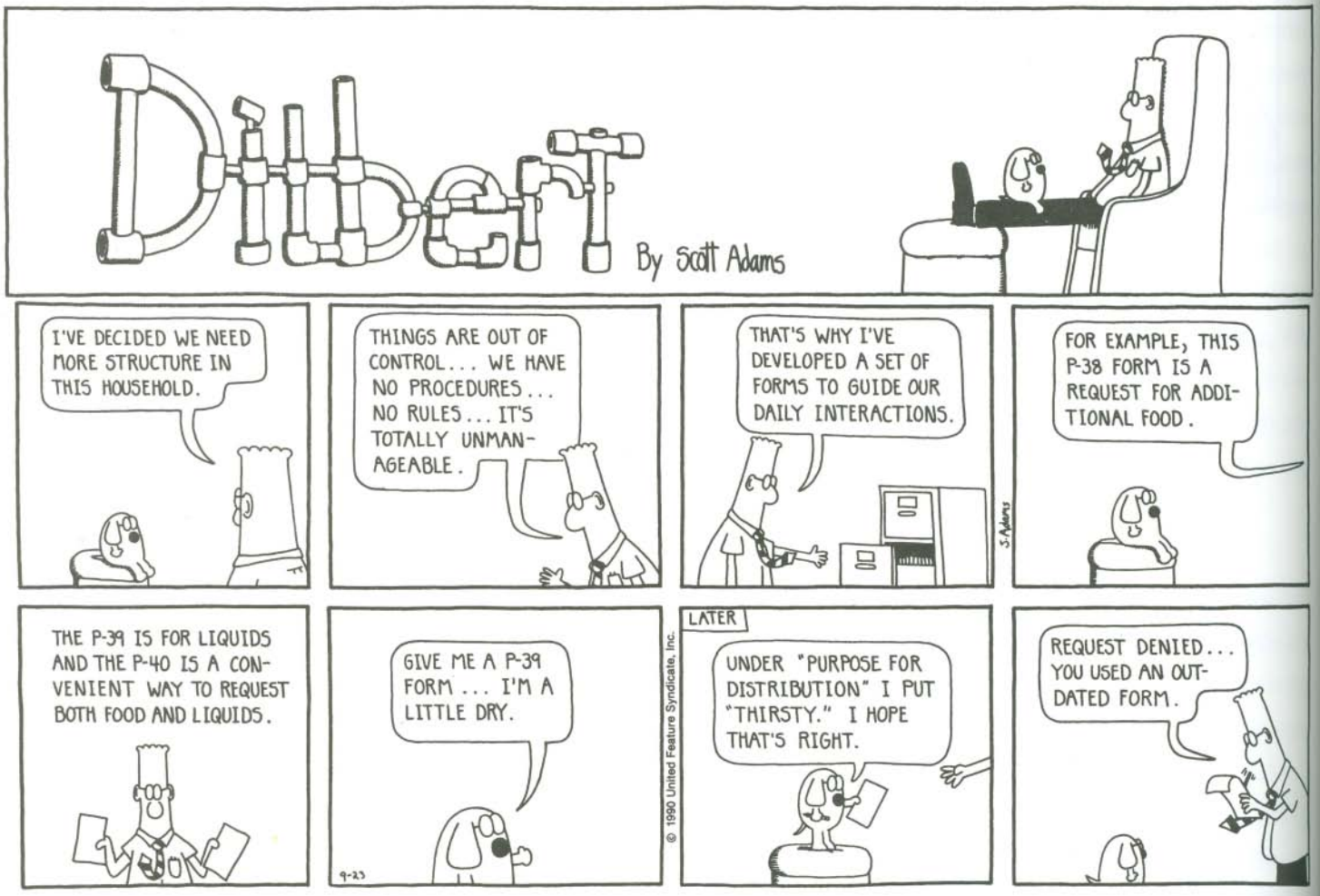
Stew Liff, the regional director, has taken the Valencia success seriously. By next year, he plans to begin relocating many workers who serve veterans from the regional office to four area VA medical centers.

The Valencia telecommuting team is leading the way. Peck says, "Our team is producing the work. Our quality is good. We plan our own vacation times, report our leave, and cover for each other when someone's sick. We're responsible adults and we're capable of doing all that without management."

All it took was an earthquake.


Dilbert
By Scott Adams
I'VE DECIDED WE NEED MORE STRUCTURE IN THIS HOUSEHOLD.
THINGS ARE OUT OF CONTROL... WE HAVE NO PROCEDURES... NO RULES... IT'S TOTALLY UNMANAGEABLE.
THAT'S WHY I'VE DEVELOPED A SET OF FORMS TO GUIDE OUR DAILY INTERACTIONS.
S. Adams
FOR EXAMPLE, THIS P-38 FORM IS A REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL FOOD.
THE P-39 IS FOR LIQUIDS AND THE P-40 IS A CONVENIENT WAY TO REQUEST BOTH FOOD AND LIQUIDS.
GIVE ME A P-39 FORM ... I'M A LITTLE DRY.
9-23
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LATER
UNDER "PURPOSE FOR DISTRIBUTION" I PUT "THIRSTY." I HOPE THAT'S RIGHT.
REQUEST DENIED... YOU USED AN OUTDATED FORM.

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had more than 600 forms and sets of instructions for its customers. Before the Small Business Administration reinvented its processes, it used to take 100 pages of paperwork to apply for a loan that now requires a single piece of paper.

## *Every Problem Started as a Solution*

The red tape had a certain logic. Government bought a lot, and it was difficult to make sure every business had a fair chance to bid for contracts. And government spent tax dollars. It had to be sure that incompetent workers didn't waste them or dishonest workers didn't steal them.

But the red tape hasn't worked out quite the way it was meant to.

Efforts to protect the taxpayers against incompetents or crooks wound up wasting money, not saving it.

WHO NEEDS TO SIGN MY BUSINESS CASE TO BUY A WEB SERVER?
S. Adams E-mail: SCOTTADAMS@AOL.COM
HMM...THIS CROSSES ALL DEPARTMENTS. I FEAR IT. GET THE APPROVAL OF EVERY DIRECTOR, EVERY VP, EVERY EVP, PLUS GRIFFIN.
5/15 © 1995 United Feature Syndicate, Inc. (NYC)
DO YOU MEAN TED GRIFFIN IN FINANCE OR THE MYTHICAL GRIFFIN BEAST THAT'S HALF EAGLE, HALF LION?
WHICHEVER IS HARDER.

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***Dilbert is lucky he didn't have to travel for the Defense Department.***

DILBERT'S EXPENSE VOUCHER
YOU SPENT NEARLY $10 PER DAY ON MEALS DURING YOUR TRIP.
S. Adams E-mail: SCOTTADAMS@AOL.COM
THE TRAVEL GUIDELINES REQUIRE YOU TO STUN A PIGEON WITH YOUR BRIEFCASE ON THE WAY TO THE HOTEL THEN FRY IT UP ON YOUR TRAVEL IRON.
I TRIED... BUT IT WAS TAKING SO LONG.
TRY THE "WOOL" SETTING.
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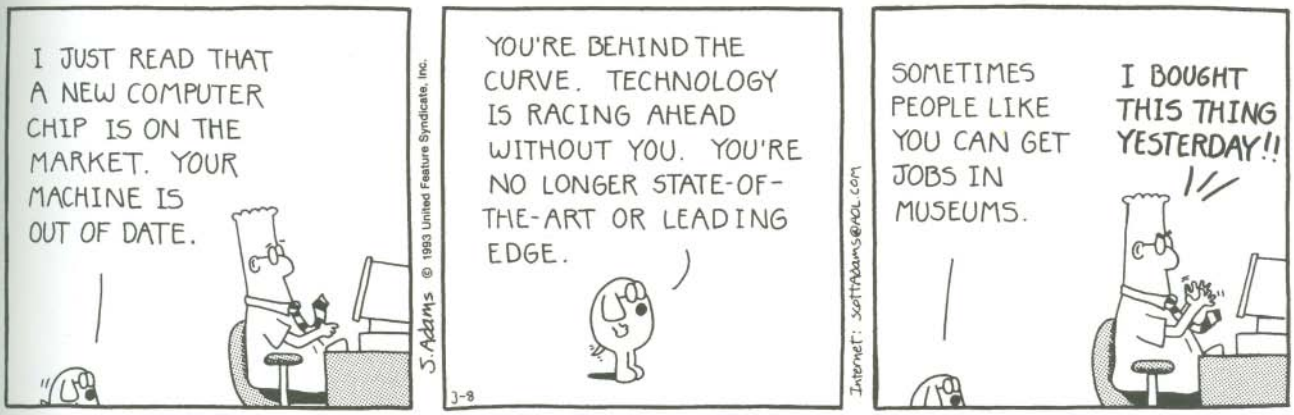
TALES FROM THE REINVENTION ZONE

## *Treating Travelers Like Honest People*

*Reform at the Defense Department is saving taxpayers $400 million a year.*

Not too long ago, the Defense Department's travel process was like a bad dream. With 230 pages of travel regulations and multiple "sign-off" signatures, the 7 million trips that Defense Department travelers took were paper nightmares. The cost of Defense's travel system administration was triple that of private-sector corporations.


I JUST READ THAT A NEW COMPUTER CHIP IS ON THE MARKET. YOUR MACHINE IS OUT OF DATE.
YOU'RE BEHIND THE CURVE. TECHNOLOGY IS RACING AHEAD WITHOUT YOU. YOU'RE NO LONGER STATE-OF-THE-ART OR LEADING EDGE.
SOMETIMES PEOPLE LIKE YOU CAN GET JOBS IN MUSEUMS.
I BOUGHT THIS THING YESTERDAY!!
S. Adams © 1993 United Feature Syndicate, Inc.
Internet: scottadams@aol.com
J-8

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- *Buy commercial.* Commercial products and services provide wide variety and capability, and new ones are added every day. It almost always makes sense to sacrifice the "bells and whistles" to buy something that costs less and has been thoroughly tested.

***Don't automate the old process; reengineer.***

***Electronic transactions are now encouraged everywhere.***

I CANNOT ALLOW THIS WITHDRAWAL...
BANK OF ETHEL
© 1990 United Feature Syndicate, Inc.
UNLESS YOU DEFEAT ME IN HAND TO HAND COMBAT.
THEY SEEM PRETTY SERIOUS ABOUT ENCOURAGING THE USE OF THEIR AUTOMATED TELLER MACHINES.
Adams

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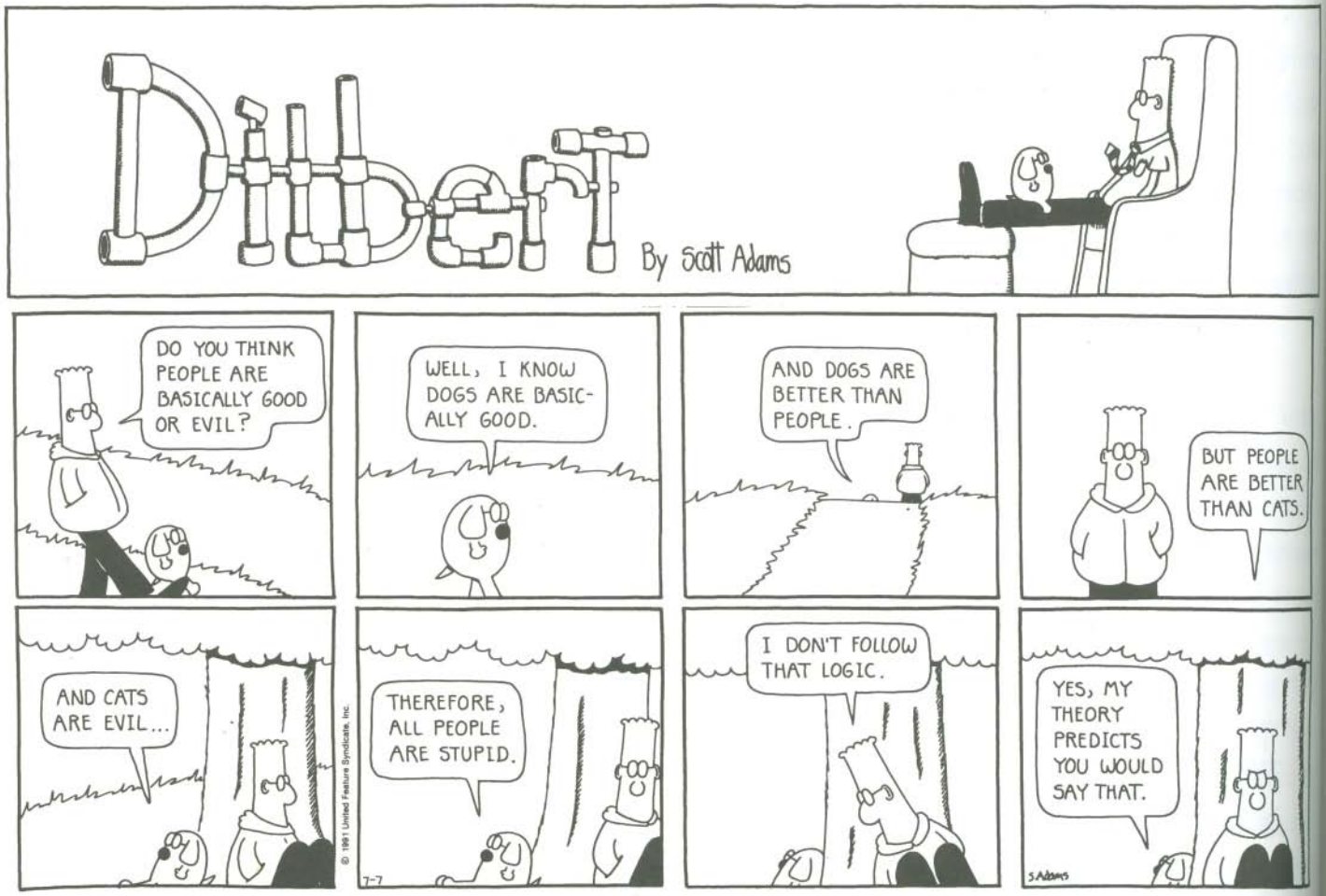
Q. What about food stores without POS?

A. We are convinced that if food stamp program recipients use only EBT cards, then stores who want their business will get wired for POS. So EBT is encouraging the "wiring of America." By the way, EBT users will look like any other consumer using a card at a POS machine. That is an enormous plus.

Q. What are your cost data so far?

A. Monthly costs per EBT card user are hovering around $1 versus $3 to $4 in the food stamp system. If more benefit programs are provided on EBT cards — like social security, veterans, railroad retirement, and state benefit programs — we could save somewhere between $200 million and a quarter billion dollars a year, every year. And at last state and federal benefit


Dilbert
By Scott Adams
DO YOU THINK PEOPLE ARE BASICALLY GOOD OR EVIL?
WELL, I KNOW DOGS ARE BASICALLY GOOD.
AND DOGS ARE BETTER THAN PEOPLE.
BUT PEOPLE ARE BETTER THAN CATS.
AND CATS ARE EVIL...
THEREFORE, ALL PEOPLE ARE STUPID.
I DON'T FOLLOW THAT LOGIC.
YES, MY THEORY PREDICTS YOU WOULD SAY THAT.
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7-7
S.Adams

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GOOD REPORT, BUT CHANGE THE WORD "USE" TO "UTILIZE" IN EACH CASE.
CHANGE "HELP" TO "FACILITATE" AND REPLACE "DO" WITH "IMPLEMENTATION PHASE."
HMM... IT'S STILL A BIT TOO READABLE.
I COULD REDUCE THE TYPE SIZE AND RUN IT THROUGH THE FAX.
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## *Safety, Plain and Simple*

*OSHA provides expert workplace safety advice in plain English on the World Wide Web; no lawyers needed to interpret.*

Most business people want to do what's right by keeping the environment clean and protecting their workers. Often, companies have to hire lawyers just to understand what the regulations require. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration heard the frustrations of the business community and responded in two ways. It began a plain English initiative, rewriting the rule book to make the regulations easy to understand. And it's established "expert advisors" on the Internet to answer important business questions.

If a small business contractor has a question about working with asbestos, for example, she can download

NATIONAL
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AL GORE
Vice President of the United States

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